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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - LEBANON BOMBING ATTACK KYOTO PROTOCOL IRAQ

PARIS - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. LEBANON BOMBING ATTACK
- [1](#)2. KYOTO PROTOCOL
- [1](#)3. IRAQ

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO MIGHT BE BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI DOMINATE TODAY'S EDITORIALS AND FRONT PAGES. RADIO COMMENTATOR BERNARD GUETTA ECHOES MOST EDITORIALISTS WHEN HE TITLES HIS COMMENTARY: "SYRIA'S SHADOW." FOR LE FIGARO, THE ATTACK SIGNALS A "RETURN TO CHAOS" FOR LEBANON, WHILE LIBERATION SEES THE BOMBING AS AN "ATTACK ON PEACE." ALL EDITORIALISTS SEVERELY CONDEMN THE BOMBING, AND SEE EITHER A SYRIAN OR IRANIAN CONNECTION BEHIND IT. (SEE PART C)

AS THE KYOTO PROTOCOL GETS READY TO BE IMPLEMENTED, "WITHOUT THE U.S." WRITES LA CROIX ON ITS FRONT PAGE, SEVERAL ARTICLES AND OP-EDS WEIGH THE IMPACT OR LACK THEREOF OF THE INVESTMENT THAT WILL BE MADE BY THE SIGNATORIES. IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO BJORN LOMBORG WHO IS BEHIND THE COPENHAGEN CONSENSUS, CONTENDS THAT "ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE WRONG. KYOTO IS A COSTLY WAY OF NOT ACHIEVING MUCH. IT WOULD BE BEST TO USE THE MONIES FOR OTHER MORE URGENT PRIORITIES, SUCH AS PROVIDING POTABLE WATER AND MINIMUM HEALTH CARE TO THOSE WHO LACK SUCH AMENITIES." BUT IN LA CROIX, DOMINIQUE QUINIO DEFENDS AN OPPOSING VIEW. (SEE PART C)

CATHOLIC LA CROIX CARRIES AN EDITORIAL ON THE FUTURE OF IRAQ, AND IS OPTIMISTIC THAT "AN IRAN-LIKE REGIME IS IMPROBABLE." (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

LEBANON BOMBING ATTACK

"THE SYRIAN SUSPECT"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (02/15): "THE POLITICAL ATTACK THAT KILLED RAFIK HARIRI IS ONE OF THOSE EVENTS THAT ANNOUNCE SERIOUS AFTERSHOCKS. HARIRI ILLUSTRATED THE NORMALIZATION WHICH LEBANON HAD MANAGED TO ACHIEVE. BUT YESTERDAY, THE HOPE FOR A SOFT LEBANESE EVOLUTION WAS BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS. ONCE BEFORE, WHEN MARUAN HAMADE ESCAPED AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT IN OCTOBER 2004, MANY OBSERVERS SAW A WARNING FROM DAMASCUS. IF HARIRI'S ASSASSINATION WERE TO HAVE THE SAME MOTIVE, THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE EXTREMELY SERIOUS. IT WOULD MEAN AN ATTEMPT BY DAMASCUS TO INTIMIDATE AND TO IMPOSE AN IRON CONTROL OVER LEBANON. BEYOND THAT IT WOULD SIGNIFY A TOTAL REJECTION OF COOPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HARIRI WAS A PRIVILEGED INTERLOCUTOR ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. HIS ASSASSINATION IS NOT ONE MORE POLITICAL ATTACK IN LEBANON'S HISTORY. IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO RADICALLY WEIGH IN ON THE PROCESS UNDERWAY IN THE REGION. CONSIDERING HOW MUCH SYRIA IS UNDER SUSPICION, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT FRANCE HAS ASKED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE BOMBING. IT IS ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT THE U.S. IS READY TO COLLABORATE WITH THE UN AND ITS ALLIES."

"THE WORST"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (02/15): "THE OPPOSITION TO SYRIA WHICH HARIRI EMBODIED WAS ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. AND FRANCE. HARIRI WAS AWARE OF THE RISKS INHERENT TO A POLITICAL CHALLENGE OF SYRIA. HIS KILLERS, WHOEVER THEY MAY BE, ARE PROFESSIONALS WHOSE GOAL IT IS TO DESTABILIZE LEBANON. THEIR GOAL WAS TO REMIND EVERYONE THAT LEBANON IS STILL A TIME BOMB THAT CAN GO OFF AT ANY MOMENT AND AFFECT THE REGION. IF ONE ASKS THE QUESTION, WHO PROFITS FROM THE CRIME?, THE FIRST ANSWER IS OF COURSE SYRIA. THIS IS NOT PROOF; THERE CAN BE OTHER CULPRITS. BUT IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF SYRIA'S PRESIDENT ASSAD, WHO HAS BEEN CALLED BY PRESIDENT BUSH A PILLAR OF THE CLUB OF FRIENDS SUPPORTING TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST, TO ACCEPT THE INVESTIGATION CALLED FOR BY FRANCE, SO AS NOT TO BE FINGERED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IF SYRIA CHOOSES TO OPT FOR A POLICY OF THE WORST,

EVEN PRESIDENT CHIRAC, A FRIEND OF HARIRI, COULD FEEL TARGETED."

"OCCUPATION"

BRUNO FRAPPAT IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (02/15): "FIFTEEN YEARS OF WAR, FIFTEEN YEARS OF OCCUPATION. IN A NUTSHELL THIS IS LEBANON'S HISTORY FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS. DID HARIRI PAY WITH HIS LIFE FOR HAVING POLITICALLY BROKEN RELATIONS WITH THE OCCUPIER? MANY SIGNS POINT TO A SYRIAN CONNECTION, OR MORE APTLY, A SYRIAN-LEBANESE CONNECTION: HARIRI'S STATURE AND THE SUPPORT HE RECEIVED FROM THE U.S. AND FRANCE. BUT MUST WE LOOK ONLY AT SYRIA? WE CANNOT IGNORE THE IRANIAN CONNECTION: HARIRI WAS SEEN AS THE FUTURE WESTERN `PAWN' IN THE REGION, MOSTLY A U.S. PAWN. COULD THIS HAVE BEEN A MESSAGE TO THE U.S.?"

"LEBANON: WHO PROFITS FROM THE CRIME?"

JULES CLAUWAERT IN THE REGIONAL NORD LAIR (02/15): "IT WAS AT THE INSTIGATION OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES THAT THE U.N. REQUESTED THAT SYRIA WITHDRAW ITS OCCUPATION TROOPS STATIONED IN LEBANON. SYRIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE PROMISED TO TAKE ACTIONS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH A `FRIENDLY' LEBANON. YESTERDAY, THEY CONDEMNED THE ATTACK. BUT IN BEIRUT, PEOPLE HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS THAT IN BOMB ATTACKS, CERTAIN SPECIALISTS DON'T DO THINGS HALFWAY."

KYOTO PROTOCOL

"FIRST VICTORY"

DOMINIQUE QUINIO IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (02/15): "VICTORY WAS NOT CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET. IT TOOK SEVEN YEARS FOR THE PROTOCOL TO FINALLY REACH THE STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION. OF COURSE WE CAN WONDER ABOUT THE ACTUAL EFFECTIVENESS OF A PROTOCOL FROM WHICH THE LARGEST POLLUTER, THE U.S., HAS EXCLUDED ITSELF. IN SPITE OF THE MANY RESERVATIONS ONE MIGHT HAVE. IT WOULD NOT BE FAIR TO MINIMIZE TOMORROW'S EVENT. ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY ONE COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO FIND ANSWERS TOGETHER. THIS FORM OF MULTILATERALISM, WHICH PRESIDENT BUSH DOES NOT WANT, IS REALLY GOOD NEWS."

IRAQ

"A PLURALISTIC IRAQ"

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (02/15): "THE SHIITES ARE IN A POSITION OF STRENGTH. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE THE MAJORITY, THEY DO NOT NEVERTHELESS REPRESENT ALL OF IRAQ. IN A REGION OF THE WORLD WHERE SOCIAL RULES ARE BASED ON RELIGIONS, ETHNICITY AND TRIBAL TRADITIONS, THE EXERCISE OF POWER BY A SINGLE COMMUNITY IS POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH CONSTRAINT. NO COUNTRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS ETHNICALLY OR RELIGIOUSLY HOMOGENEOUS. THE INABILITY TO ADAPT TO THIS REALITY IS THE REASON FOR DICTATORSHIPS AND AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. IN IRAQ, THERE MAY BE SHIITES WHO BELIEVE THAT COEXISTENCE WITH OTHER MINORITIES IS A NECESSITY. IT IS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT AN IRAN-LIKE SCENARIO WILL DEVELOP AND LEAD TO AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC IN IRAQ. IRAQ'S AYATOLLAHS OPPOSE KHOMENI'S DOCTRINE. BUT BEYOND THAT, THE AMERICANS WHO ARE STILL VERY MUCH AT THE HELM IN BAGHDAD WILL ACT IN FAVOR OF A REGIME WHICH IS AS SECULAR AS IT CAN BE." LEACH